

Department of Human Services

Prepared by the
DHS Office of
Communications
(517) 373-7394



Articles in Today's Clips Monday, June 11, 2007

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
* Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-9
Adoption	10
Domestic Violence	11
Juvenile Justice	12-15
Health Care	16
Child Support	17-18
Foster Care	19-22
Homelessness	23-26
Food Assistance	27-34
State Budget	35

*Important story at this spot



Appeals Court agrees with judge in Holland case

June 8, 2007

By JACK KRESNAK

Free Press Staff Writer

A three-judge Michigan Court of Appeals panel has unanimously upheld an Ingham County Family Court judge's decision to terminate the parental rights of Lisa Gail Holland who was convicted in October of murdering her 7-year-old son Ricky.

The ruling that was dated Thursday and released Friday was by judges E. Thomas Fitzgerald, David Sawyer and Peter O'Connell.

The judges found that Judge Janelle Lawless was correct on Dec. 18 to terminate Lisa Holland's parental rights to Ricky's four surviving siblings for a number of reasons, including her conviction of first-degree murder in Ricky's July 2005 death.

"The children suffered emotional harm related to the loss of Ricky and their parents' imprisonment, and they required long-term therapy," the appeals panel wrote. "Residing with or continuing a bond with a parent who had murdered their sibling would be emotionally harmful."

Lisa Holland, 34, is serving a sentence of life in prison without parole. She is appealing her conviction.

The ruling clears the way for relatives of Holland's husband Tim Holland to adopt the four children, two boys and two girls now age 3 to 5. Tim Holland voluntarily surrendered his parental rights. He is serving 30-60 years in prison for second-degree murder and is appealing his sentence.

Contact JACK KRESNAK at 313-2234544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

Copyright © 2007 Detroit Free Press Inc.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published June 8, 2007

Appeals court upholds termination of Lisa Holland's parental rights

Midday update

Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

The state Court of Appeals has upheld a lower court's decision to terminate Lisa Holland's parental rights to her three adopted children and one biological child.

Holland, 34 - who is serving a life prison sentence for the death of her 7-year-old adopted son, Ricky - had appealed a December ruling in Ingham County family court that stripped her of her parental rights.

She contended the termination was wrong and unnecessary because she made arrangements for her sister to care for the children, court documents show.

The two boys and two girls range in age from 3 to 5 years old.

The appeals court's ruling, dated June 7, states: "Continuing a bond with a parent who had murdered their sibling would be emotionally harmful."

Her husband, Tim Holland, 38, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is serving 30 to 60 years in prison. He voluntarily gave up his rights to the children.

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)



Court upholds ending mom's parental rights after slaying

Saturday, June 09, 2007

By Kathy Barks Hoffman

The Associated Press

LANSING -- The Michigan Court of Appeals has upheld a lower court ruling ending the parental rights of a former Jackson woman in prison for murdering her 7-year-old adopted son.

Lisa Holland, 34, is serving a life sentence in the death of Ricky Holland of Williamston. The boy's decomposed body was pulled from an icy marsh 11 months after he disappeared from his home in July 2005. His father, Tim Holland, led police to the spot. He said Lisa Holland struck Ricky in the head with a hammer and he later dumped the body in the rural game area.

The Hollands lived in Jackson before moving to Mason shortly before Ricky's death.

The three-member Court of Appeals, in an opinion released Friday, said Ingham County Family Judge Janelle Lawless was correct to take away Lisa Holland's parental rights to four other children. The children were living with Tim Holland's family and were to be available for adoption.

Three of the children -- two boys and a girl, all younger than 6 years -- were Ricky's biological siblings and had been adopted by Lisa and Tim Holland. The other daughter was born to the Hollands the year before Ricky died.

Tim Holland, 38, pleaded guilty last year to second-degree murder and was sentenced to between 30 and 60 years. He voluntarily gave up his parental rights last December.

Lisa Holland had argued that the court didn't need to end her parental rights because she'd arranged for her sister to care for the children during her imprisonment. Her attorney has said that, if she successfully appeals her conviction, Lisa Holland could care for the children in the future.

But the Court of Appeals said that the evidence showed that she had failed to provide proper care and custody for the children "by causing them extreme distress by murdering their sibling."

"The neglect and physical abuse inflicted upon Ricky was indicative of the neglect and abuse the other children would experience if returned to respondent's care," the court continued. "There was no evidence that terminating respondent's parental rights was clearly contrary to the children's best interests."

The matter was decided by Court of Appeals judges E. Thomas Fitzgerald, David Sawyer and Peter O'Connell.

©2007 Jackson Citizen Patriot

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

Saturday, June 09, 2007

Detroit Free Press

Wayne briefs

Canton Township Mother pleads guilty in alleged child beating

A mother accused of beating her 8-year-old child with a belt because he tried to drive a school bus agreed to a plea agreement Friday before 35th District Judge Michael J. Gerou. Shamika M. Tate, 28, pleaded guilty to fourth-degree child abuse, a one-year misdemeanor, in the March 28 incident. The deal requires parenting classes. Sentencing is June 18.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published June 10, 2007

William Whitbeck: Vulnerable children victimized by crisis in Mich.'s finances

William Whitbeck of Lansing is chief judge of the Michigan Court of Appeals.

We all know that we have a budget crisis in Lansing. Most of us know that it seems to go on forever, aching away like the proverbial sore tooth. Some of us know that this crisis respects no governmental boundaries and extends even to the quietest branch, the judiciary.

The proliferation of charge and counter-charge, the interplay between the various actors and interest groups, and the complexity of the mathematics make this situation one that few of us understand fully.

So, let me bring it down to simple human terms. Here is what the budget crisis means to the Court of Appeals, on which I sit: Failure.

And that failure will have consequences.

Let me explain. We have a dysfunctional system for dealing with child welfare and child protection and no one has a clue as to how to fix it. More than 100 children have died in foster care in the last 10 years. Ricky Holland was just one in a long, sad line.

These children live in a world that few of us understand. In this world, as Thomas Hobbes put it in "Leviathan", life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Once in foster care, adoptions cannot be finalized until the termination of parental rights (TPR) appeal process is concluded.

Every day that a case lingers in the TPR appeal process at the Court of Appeals is a day that child cannot be placed in a safe adoptive home. Every day reduces that child's chances for an adoption. If the case lingers too long, the child "ages out" of the foster care system at 18. And over 50 percent of those who age out commit crimes. Because a child is waiting, every day counts.

At the Court of Appeals, TPR and custody appeals have increased in the last 10 years. We have successfully reduced the time it takes to decide such appeals by over 30 percent. This has been due, in large part, to an innovative program of using contract attorneys to write these appeals. It is a wonderful program, cost effective, efficient and productive.

Due to the budget situation, we terminated this program on June 1. The delay for deciding appeals of TPR/custody cases will inevitably lengthen. Even though we will continue to expedite cases, these children will remain in the appeals limbo for longer periods of time and there is not one damn thing that I or any other judge of the Court of Appeals can do about it.

For these children, their parents have failed them. The child welfare and protection system has failed them. And now the judicial system will have failed them. Robert Louis Stevenson once said that at least once in life we all sit down to a banquet of consequences. The consequences of this

particular failure will become gradually apparent, but they will be significant. A child, or two, or 10, will die. And what price will we put on that failure?

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the
Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

Deaths of Philadelphia children mandate reform

By Larry Miller

Philadelphia Tribune

PHILADELPHIA (NNPA) — A special panel of experts has told The Philadelphia Tribune that the deaths of children in the care of the city's Department of Human Services were symptomatic of problems within the city agency that urgently need to be addressed.

The Philadelphia Child Welfare Review Panel, co-chaired by Carol Wilson Spigner and J. William Mills III, was appointed by Mayor John Street in November of last year. It followed a pattern of deaths and a series of investigative media reports on the department and was assigned to review DHS's problems stemming from its policies.

In the wake of those reports, DHS Commissioner Cheryl Ransom-Garner was forced to resign her post last year and Deputy Commissioner John McGee was terminated.

"We believe the fatalities are symptomatic of underlying problems within DHS," Spigner said during a conference with Tribune editors, reporters and panel members that also included Acting DHS Commissioner Arthur C. Evans. "They are fixable but they have to be undertaken with urgency."

Spigner said the panel examined identified cases where children had died between 2002 and 2006.

"Eight had causes that were undetermined, seven were suspicious but there was not enough evidence to show maltreatment," she said. "Twenty-seven died of maltreatment, six were natural deaths, 12 were related to unsafe sleeping practices, two were unexplained and four were related to accidents."

The majority of the children were under a year old and about half had a parent who was involved with DHS as a minor with a history of maltreatment. It shows that maltreatment in children is generational. A child who is maltreated has a greater risk of becoming a parent who maltreats their own children when combined with certain risk factors."

According to earlier reports, from 2003 through 2005, at least 20 children died of either abuse or neglect after coming to the attention of DHS including 10 from last year. Those numbers were originally disputed by former DHS Commissioner Cheryl Ransom-Garner.

"The findings also suggests that when these young adults were in the child welfare system all of their needs had not been met 20 years ago," said review board member Carol Tracy, a lawyer.

"There were issues of ongoing violence in their lives, substance abuse and mental health problems. Children who have been abused and don't get appropriate intervention don't grow up with the skills to become good parents."

Among those cases cited was the murder of 3-year-old Porchia Bennett in August 2003. Porchia's tortured and battered body was found by police officers in her home, wedged between a wall and a radiator. Bennett died from beatings, asphyxiation and malnutrition while in the care of a couple her mother had paid to look after her.

Jerry Chambers, 34, was sentenced to death as well as 73 to 146 years in prison for murdering Porchia. His girlfriend and Porchia's aunt, Candice Geiger, received 17 to 34 years for helping with the fatal beating. The child's mother, Tiffany Bennett, 30, is serving a sentence of 20 to 40 years.

Bennett allegedly abandoned her four young daughters in the squalid South Philadelphia home of Chambers, who was an alleged drug addict.

The nine-member panel's recommendations after reviewing the cases and DHS policies is that the agency has some good and bad points but does need reform within its policies and practices.

The panel outlined a series of benchmarks that the agency has to meet over the next two years.

"We found that there were 20 years of previous reports on DHS identifying problems," Spigner said. "We also conducted interviews with the courts, law enforcement, supervisors and client parents and children. In doing this we found a mix of good things and bad things, good things that can be built on."

One of the strengths was the way the agency reviewed the fatality cases and the information they gleaned was excellent. On the other hand, not much was done with that information."

One of the actions the agency has to implement is a Commissioner's Action Line that will exist outside the offices of the department. The purpose of which is to allow clients and other providers to communicate issues directly related to child safety.

That information is to be relayed directly to the commissioner and the Action Line is to be implemented no later than August 31 of this year.

Ransome-Garner could not be reached to comment for this report.



First lady to visit adoption home

Saturday, June 09, 2007

By Ted Roelofs

The Grand Rapids Press

With President Bush slated to make the first visit by an American president to Albania, a West Michigan social service agency is delighted by the travel plans of Laura Bush.

The first lady is scheduled to tour a group adoption home overseen by Bethany Christian Services on Sunday, a visit officials hope will highlight the needs of children in this impoverished country.

"We are quite excited about it," said Bethany President Bill Blacquiere. "We think it will bring attention to the needs of the children of Albania."

Agency assistance

The nonprofit agency has been a presence in Albania since 1991, when it became the first outside agency to provide social services. Dozens of West Michigan volunteers have traveled there to assist with programs that include adoption, counseling and sheltering young women and children at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

In 1999, it stepped in to furnish aid to some of the hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees driven out of neighboring Kosovo by Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

Laura Bush is scheduled to visit a group home called Hannah's House, which provides shelter for about 50 children age 4 and younger.

"It is an exciting moment for Bethany to be hosting her," said Agim Xhumari, who directs Bethany's services in Albania. "We will be glad to share with her what are the issues of the children of Albania and how we provide the care."

Abandoned kids

Xhumari said some of the children come to Hannah's House as infants, after they are abandoned at the hospital. Their mothers do so because of poverty or because the child was born out of wedlock, he said. Others are left abandoned at an older age in their homes, on the street or at the hospital, he said.

Among those in Hannah's House is a curly-headed toddler named Amelia. She was abandoned by her mother and brought to Bethany a few months later. Now 1, she awaits referral by the Albanian Adoption Agency. Her case file describes her as friendly, adding she "likes to dance, play with balls, color pictures and play outside."

Dick Roeters, vice president of advancement for Bethany, said the organization would not be what it is today in Albania without the help of West Michigan. Christ Memorial Church in Holland took particular interest in the projects there, raising much of the funds to build their facilities in Albania.

"The West Michiganders have pretty much funded the construction of the group homes in Albania," Roeters said.

Send e-mail to the author: troelofs@grpress.com

Will the Money Come in Time?

WILX Reporter: Jessica Aspiras

Email Address: jessica.aspiras@wilx.com



"Summertime has always been a slow time. Turnaround on checks have been slow, notoriously in July."

What scares Eve Inc. executive director, Susan Shoultz, is the added 45 day moratorium on grants that Governor Granholm issued in early April -- to help with the budget deficit.

"That was our concern when we began this. Is it really going to be 45 days, was it going to be longer than 45 days."

Eve Inc. is a non-profit organization that helps victims of domestic violence. It has a total of three state-funded grants. The one from the Department of Community Health was given an exemption from the moratorium. But the other two grants, from the Department of Human Services, are not exempt.

"Basically it would fall back to our donations if they're not there. Then we have to exercise the line of credit that we've taken out."

Shoultz bills DHS at the beginning of each month for the previous month's expenses. Before the moratorium was set, Shoultz says reimbursement checks would come in in about three to four weeks. Now the wait is at least 45 days. As a back up, Shoultz increased the organization's credit line by three-fold just in case it had to draw money from that.

"That is not a situation we want to encounter, because that means we're incurring debt for something we shouldn't have to incur debt for."

News 10 spoke with Maureen Sorbet of the Department of Human Services. She said if there is a delay, it should only be on the arrival of the first check. As long as non-profits bill consistently every month, the money should arrive within the 45 day moratorium.

"Hopefully what they've said would be true, that it'll be a one time occurrence, and we'll have the money on a regular basis. But until that happens I think we have a right to be skeptical."

The moratorium is scheduled to last until the end of the fiscal year -- September 30th.

18-year-old alleged assault victim speaks out; boy, 13, may be tried as adult

BY CHRIS EPPLETT

cepplett@grandhaventribune.com

GRAND HAVEN TOWNSHIP — One day before her high school graduation, an 18-year-old Grand Haven Township woman says she was stalked and sexually assaulted by a 13-year-old neighbor boy.

That neighbor, Fathi Cullen, the son of Antonio and Saundra Cullen of 14514 Dogwood Court, lives on the same street as the alleged victim's mother in the township's River Haven Village mobile home park. The woman lives in the same mobile home park with her aunt.

The Tribune does not name victims of sex-related crimes.

The 18-year-old woman said Thursday that she believes her alleged attacker "had a plan," and that Cullen deserves the new charges he now faces — six charges in total and the possibility of being sentenced as an adult.

Ottawa County Assistant Prosecutor Jennifer Kuiper on Wednesday withdrew previous charges of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and first-degree home invasion, replacing them with four new felony charges and two misdemeanor charges.

Officials with the Ottawa County Sheriff's Department said Cullen entered the victim's home on Crooked Tree Lane in River Haven Village mobile home park and sexually assaulted her around 11 a.m. Saturday. During the five-hour search for Cullen that afternoon, police say he also attempted to sexually assault two other girls, ages 12 and 14, in Hofma Park, west of Forest Park Drive.

Cullen, who is now lodged in the Ottawa County Juvenile Detention Center, was apprehended at around 4 p.m. Saturday at the park — approximately three miles southwest of the first incident.

The latest charges against Cullen stem from new information gathered by Sheriff's Department investigators late Monday and Tuesday, said Lt. Mark Bennett, head of the county detective unit.

"We did some more digging and additional witnesses stepped forward," he said, adding that police encouraged county prosecutors to revise the charges.

Additionally, Kuiper petitioned Juvenile Court Judge Mark Feyen to designate Cullen as an adult. According to the designation, Cullen would be afforded the same protection as an adult, giving the judge the option sentence Cullen as an adult, Kuiper said. The judge still has the option to sentence him as a juvenile or impose a delayed sentence.

"(This) means the defendant could receive probation as a juvenile," she said. "If anything happened, if he violates the probation, he would be sentenced as an adult."

Cullen's parents declined to comment on the alleged incidents.

The felony charges, alleged events leading up to them and Cullen's possible sentencing terms include:

- Attempted first-degree criminal sexual conduct. Prosecutors say the 18-year-old victim prevented Cullen from executing actual penetration, but a clear attempt was made when the victim claims he forced himself on her and ripped her shirt off before she could escape. He faces up to five years in prison and mandatory disease testing.
- First-degree home invasion for entering the victim's home. Cullen faces up to 20 years in jail and/or \$5,000 in fines.
- Second-degree criminal sexual conduct for the sexual assault committed on the 18-year-old woman. He faces up to 15 years in prison and mandatory AIDS and HIV testing.
- Interfering with electronic communications for breaking the victim's cell phone during an attempt to call police. He faces up to two years in jail and/or \$1,000.

The alleged actions leading to those charges are something the 18-year-old woman said she won't soon forget.

Sitting with her brother and mother in their home Thursday afternoon, the victim recalled the events from late Saturday morning.

"Obviously it's not only affected me, but my family a lot," she said somberly, still affected by Saturday's events. "It's kind of a nightmare, really, to have someone walk into your house and violate you."

According to the woman and her brother, who were inside their mother's home, Cullen first approached the doorstep of their mother's home on Dogwood Court before following her to her aunt's home on the other side of the mobile home park, where the woman resides.

"He saw me and he ran away," the woman's brother said. "I feel if I would have chased him away this wouldn't have happened."

The woman said she didn't realize she was being watched or followed.

"I think he had a plan," she said, adding that she has seen the boy in the past since her mother moved into River Haven Village in December. "I'd been over here a couple times. He never said anything to me. I never said anything to him."

"It's weird how he knew she was home alone," her brother added. "It's sad a 13-year-old goes around doing that. Obviously, he's sick."

The woman said after Cullen entered her home, he jumped on her, knocked her to the floor and ripped off her shirt.

"I pushed him off of me and I just ran to the other side of the house," she said. "He went into the kitchen. I think he was looking for something to hurt me with."

During the struggle, the woman said she knocked Cullen's glasses off and attempted to call 911 on her cell phone. Cullen grabbed the flip phone and ripped its face off, she said. When she went to her living room to use the land line phone to call 911, she said Cullen ran away.

Less than one week later, the 18-year-old says the whole ordeal has changed her.

"It hasn't been that long, but sometimes what happened comes back in my mind," she said. "It's hard to go to sleep at night. It just never goes away."

"Your home is supposed to be your safe place," her brother said. "For him to come in do that, I'm pretty sure she feels like she doesn't have one anymore."

Since the alleged attack, the woman has been staying at her mother's home, unable to return to the home where she says the incident all began.

"She can't stand being in that house," her mother said.

The victim's family and area neighbors said they had no idea a 13-year-old boy living in their neighborhood had such a criminal past.

David Spear, vice president of operations for Sun Communities which owns and operates River Haven, said the company was unaware of Cullen's criminal history.

The family believes Fathi Cullen's parents should have made the neighborhood aware of their son's criminal history.

"They never said anything about their 13-year-old having a problem," the alleged victim's mother said, referring to Cullen's history of sexual deviancy dating back to an October 2005 indecent exposure charge.

According to Ottawa County court records, Cullen pleaded no contest to fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct for an incident with a 38-year-old woman, whom he grabbed in

the crotch and breast area. He also failed to register as a sex offender in January 2007. As a student at Sheldon Pines School in Holland, Cullen violated school rules by looking at sexual Web sites on a school computer and "physically touched a school staff member," court records show.

"I think he is a danger to our society and community and it is our duty to protect the community," Kuiper said of Cullen.

The victim's family had little remorse for the boy.

"I know he's only 13, but there's no remorse for him," the victim's brother said. "It's what he deserves."

"He shouldn't be free, especially since he has a history of it." her mother added.

In addition to the felony charges, prosecutors Wednesday also filed two misdemeanor charges against Cullen, including fourth-degree criminal sexual conduct — a high court misdemeanor charge that is treated like a felony — and indecent exposure for the alleged attempted assaults in Hofma Park.

Cullen's next hearing is scheduled for June 20.



Medicaid editorial hit mark

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

GENESEE COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Monday, June 11, 2007

By Hesham Gayar

Journal Reader

I feel compelled to write because of The Flint Journal's May 16 editorial "Medicaid cuts," [Page A14] did a superb job of explaining a very sad and very complicated situation.

There may be a fiscal crisis with the state budget, but no matter what party one supports, no matter how one feels about the health care system, and no matter how one feels about the state budget, there is one thing that is very clear: People need care, and Medicaid does not cover the cost of providing the care that recipients need and receive. The Journal is to be commended for raising that point so clearly.

We also must compliment you for so clearly pointing out the precarious nature of cutting reimbursement to Medicaid providers, the hospitals and doctors. Our safety net in this community is unparalleled. It is so great because people care deeply about their fellow citizens, so they provide care even though the cost is not covered.

This safety net involves many components. It is fragile. To put a major component of the safety net at risk was fiscally wrong and just plain wrong.

Hesham Gayar

president, Genesee County

Medical Society

©2007 Flint Journal

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.



This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published June 11, 2007

Calhoun Co. starting new jail alternative

Civil offenders to do road, park work; go home at night

Darby Prater
Special to the Lansing State Journal

MARSHALL - The Calhoun County Board of Commissioners approved the proposed Roads/Parks Work Pilot Program, allocating \$10,000 from the general fund contingency to the county road commission to offset startup costs of the program.

The program is a jail alternative for civil offenders.

"The people who participate in this program are sentenced for civil contempt, including failure to abide by court orders to pay child support," said Thomas Whitesell, Calhoun County deputy friend of the court.

Participants will be assigned work on county roads and manual-labor projects five days a week without pay. They will be allowed to go home at night.

"We're hoping they will reconsider getting employment and paying child support so they don't have to go through this again," Whitesell said.

County officials see it as a cost savings to taxpayers as well as an opportunity for these offenders to learn their lesson through hard work.

"I am very supportive of this for several reasons," Commissioner Jase Bolger, R-Marshall, said. "One, it continues to keep the taxpayers safe. These are not violent offenders; they are supervised, and this is not voluntary. Two, it will be a tough sentence with manual labor Three, there is a benefit to taxpayers. We take this individual and put them to work for the taxpayer rather than the taxpayer going to work all day to pay for these inmates to get three square meals a day."

Workers will be supervised and required to undergo a safety briefing and sign medical waivers to avoid liability.

Dennis Randolph, Calhoun County Road Commission managing director, said both men and women are eligible for the program. He added that this type of program is not new to the road commission.

"For the past 10 years, we have had a work crew comprised of occupants of the county jail," Randolph said. "The road commission has a lot of experience with this type of program. We pay deputies to oversee them."

The difference this time is that the program will be an actual sentence, rather than a voluntary opportunity for offenders to reduce their jail time, Whitesell said.

About 10 workers will participate in the pilot program, according to Randolph. If the program continues, he hopes to increase that number to 30 or 40 participants.

The pilot program is set to start this month and run through Labor Day. After the initial period, the board will revisit the issue to consider continuation of the program.

Darby Prater is a reporter at the Battle Creek Enquirer. She can be reached at 966-0589 or dprater@battlecr.gannett.com.

Copyright 2007 Lansing State Journal Use of this site signifies your agreement to the Terms of Service (updated August 2006)

[\[Back\]](#)

[Click here to return to the Kansan](#)

County needs more foster homes

Sixty-three families 'not nearly enough,' Ennis Center official says

By Jerry Wolffe

Journal Register News Service

It was just before Christmas 1989 when Penny and Craig Weinburger took in their first foster children, a 5-year-old girl and 3-year-old boy.

The two Milford Township children had been neglected and physically abused.

The girl, Theresa, had been sexually abused by her grandfather and didn't speak. Her grandfather also was her father as a result of an incestuous relationship with his daughter, Theresa's mother.

Theresa had post-traumatic stress disorder, doctors told Penny Weinburger. Her brother, Nicholas, had been beaten, and neither child trusted anyone.

After living with and being healed by the love, patience and understanding of the Weinburgers of Highland Township, the two children were adopted.

Since that day in 1989, the Weinburgers have opened their home to about 300 foster children. On April 24, they received the Hon. Joan E. Young Award as the Oakland County Foster Parents of the Year.

The award was presented as part of the nonprofit annual Circle of Light awareness event hosted by the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County and the state Department of Human Services-Oakland.

The Weinburgers' home is much like that envisioned by poet Robert Frost when he wrote, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."

"With these kids, they don't have any place to go," said Penny Weinburger, 43. "For whatever reason, God sent them to me. Any child can stay with us as long as they have to."

The goal of foster care is to have the child returned to the parents, if the parents' home is safe, said Emilie Forrester, the intake/certification supervisor for the Ennis Center.

The center, which has an office in Waterford Township, two in Detroit and one in Flint, has the mission to "preserve and reunify families whenever possible and to create new families when needed."

Ennis has 63 foster care homes in Oakland. Forrester said that is "not nearly enough" to meet the need.

Chuck Ludwig, an advocate from the Child Abuse and Neglect Council of

Oakland County in Pontiac, said that because there are not enough foster homes in Oakland County, "many of our children have to be sent to other counties, and that is not an ideal situation."

At the state level, Dorothy Butler of the Department of Human Services agreed with Ludwig.

"We never have enough good foster care parents to take in abused or disabled children and we need to make the public more aware of the need," Butler said.

The children are supposed to be out of foster care by 18 but "a lot of them end up back at my house," said Penny.

Weinburger is mother to Bill, 20, and Mandy, 16, and stepmother to Jaycee, 35, and Craig Jr., 28, of Las Vegas. The Weinburgers have adopted Chad, 17, and Hannah Joy, 5.

Children of all races have been taken into the loving arms of the Weinburgers during their nearly two decades as foster parents.

Penny recalls taking son Bill to a doctor's office when he was 2 or 3.

A little boy in the office had bruises over his body and a "handprint on his face and I felt like taking the mother out into the parking lot and. ... " she recalled.

"I can tell by the way you're looking at me that you're not pleased," the other woman told Penny. "But it's not what you think. I'm a foster mother and he was just given to me."

In that moment, Weinburger decided to be a foster mother. Her husband, Craig, 54 and a General Motors Corp. worker, later agreed.

They received training from the Ennis Center, getting 27 hours of instruction in child development and ways to deal with the psychological and physical problems the children have as a result of abuse, said Forrester, of Novi. Caseworkers monitor foster homes with monthly visits.

"One little boy, Stephen, asked what I would do if he threw a basketball at my car," she said. "I told him I'd ask him not to do that. 'What if I threw it at your head, would you burn me?'" she said Stephen asked.

"Nobody would ever burn or beat you here," was her reply.

Some abused children present especially difficult problems, said Weinburger.

Chris, then 14, had been abandoned by his mother and placed with his father whom he had not known, Weinburger said. "His dad had a girlfriend and they threw him out on the street.

"He was placed in our house and was abusive to others and to himself. He was a cutter. His language was inappropriate. His father had repeatedly beaten him."

Chris underwent intensive and lengthy therapy and lives in a residential program at age 16, said Penny.

One girl, Amanda, came to the Weinburgers' home in 1991 at age 16.

"Ennis begged me to keep her a couple of days. When she walked into my house with her blond hair all ratted up, she told me: 'My name is Amanda. I smoke. I'm not going to call you mom and I will never wear a dress.'

"I said fine, but if you smoke you won't do it in my home."

Amanda was placed in another home but ran away.

"I found her and we drew up a contract. I told her I'd stand by her side forever as long as she stayed in school. She ended up getting pregnant and taking off. She got pregnant again and ended up calling me asking for help."

The girl and her babies were put up in a motel for a month and the three were brought back into the Weinburgers' home after Amanda got on Aid to Dependent Children and went to alternative school.

"It seemed she had gotten her act together," said Weinburger of Amanda. "But she found another guy and got pregnant again at 18 in 1993. I told her I wanted her tubes tied for a Christmas present and she complied."

After that, Amanda got a job as a manager at a car wash and found a guy, Seth Palosaari, who loved her.

They married, and today they are living in Highland Township with their three children.

"Amanda is my best friend," said Weinburger. "She has turned out to be a wonderful mother and is a phenomenal person."

She and Forrester say there is a desperate need for more foster parents.

"Everybody knows what a Big Mac is but nobody knows what a MARE book is," Weinburger said. The MARE book stands for Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange and it lists the names of foster children waiting for a home.

"There's bad parenting, but there's no such thing as a bad kid," said Weinburger in an echo of the words decades ago of the Rev. Edward Flanagan.

The Catholic priest opened Father Flanagan's Boys Home in 1912 with \$90 that he borrowed.

Today, Girls and Boys Town has grown from a small home in Nebraska to 9 sites in 15 states. Each year, it helps 46,000 youths and has provided shelter, food and care for more than 500,000 homeless children since its inception.

As for the Weinburgers, they intend to keep their six-bedroom home open to needy, abused and neglected children for as many years as possible.

"I will never turn a child away," Penny said. "I will get up any time of the day or night and go anywhere to save a child."

Click here to return to story:

http://www.dailytribune.com/stories/061107/loc_foster001.shtml

June 11, 2007

Off the Street and in an Apartment, but Unable to Escape Homelessness

By [MANNY FERNANDEZ](#)

For years, Johnny Five lived not on the streets but below them, in the dark underworld beneath an abandoned train station in the Bronx.

He had to crawl in the dirt at the edge of a concrete platform to get in and out. He bathed with rubbing alcohol, but still his skin was covered with insect bites and infections. He said God talked to him there, sometimes through a portable radio, yet he considered his cave a kind of hell: overheated in the summer, frigid in the winter, a sunless place hard on the body but worse on the soul.

It was Christmas Eve when he first heard the news: Someone was offering him a way out. After reading an article about Johnny in The New York Times, Peter D. Beitchman, the executive director of the Bridge Inc., a nonprofit group that provides housing and services to mentally ill homeless people and others, immediately arranged for him to move into an apartment.

Days later, Johnny celebrated with the one person who had looked after him, Sister Lauria Fitzgerald, a Roman Catholic nun who helps the homeless in the Bronx. They ate dinner with another nun at an Italian restaurant in the Arthur Avenue section, three miles from the cave and around the corner from Johnny's new home. He feasted on a plate of eggplant parmigiana and enjoyed his first taste of tiramisù.

But he didn't want to touch the white linen napkin on the table. It was too clean.

"I thought I wasn't worthy to use it," said Johnny, 45, who said he suffers from schizophrenia and whose real name is John Carbonell. "I used the one that was in the basket where the bread was."

For the next several months, Johnny would drift between his old life underground and his new one above it, struggling the way a man freed from prison must readjust to society. It is easy in a sense to take the city's homeless people off the streets, but it is harder, as Johnny's odyssey illustrates, to take homelessness out of them.

Even after Johnny moved into the apartment the first week of January, he returned to the wooded area around the cave to feed Meow Meow and the other stray cats he had named. His first several days in the apartment — a light-drenched one-bedroom unit with hardwood floors and a large kitchen in a five-story building — he did not bother locking the door. "There's no doors in the cave," he explained.

He had bold ambitions of starting over: He talked about getting a sewing machine, so he could design

clothes, and he refused to move his belongings from the cave to the apartment because he worried about bringing in bugs. He wanted to put up "No Smoking" signs, vowing not to indulge his old addictions in his new environment. Johnny, an ex-convict who served time in the early 1990s for a drug-related offense, has been smoking cocaine since he was a teenager.

One Sunday in January, Johnny slept on the bed, on top of the covers, wearing a leather jacket and muddy boots. He resembled not the sole occupant of Apartment 3B, but a visitor. He said he spent the night in the apartment, then went back to the cave at 6 a.m., then returned later that morning to the apartment. The flashlight he used in the cave still shone inside his jacket pocket.

He woke up and sat outside on the back fire escape, smoking a cigarette. Behind him, he could hear the water running in the bathtub, his bathtub. On the streets, he used to wash up at an open fire hydrant.

Johnny survives on a monthly check from the federal Supplemental Security Income program. As part of his arrangement with the Bridge, the nonprofit group that provided the apartment, his rent would be \$168 a month, about 30 percent of his government check. Sister Lauria and two case managers, one from the Bridge and one from the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, planned to help him make the transition.

The bed and the furniture had been supplied by the Bridge. Yet furnishings were not new to Johnny. In the cave, he had created a makeshift home: Sleeping on a quilt-covered mattress atop milk crates, keeping a bottle of cologne near the bed, cooking with cans of Sterno, using a car battery to power a DVD player. He was not awed by 3B, but somewhat suspicious of it.

"Sometimes the one living in that cardboard box is happier than the one living at the penthouse," he said.

Johnny had been living in the cave off and on since 1986, and for the last nine years or so he had settled in permanently. The abandoned train station sits in a fenced-off area thick with weeds and trash not far from Yankee Stadium.

Sister Lauria tried for years to persuade Johnny to get out of the cave, but it was not until last year that he told her he wanted to leave. "I realized I would have been better off doing 10 years in prison than nine years in that cave, crawling in and out, getting scabs, bugs," he said.

Johnny's homelessness was not about a lack of housing. It was more complicated, a result of a variety of spiritual, psychological and emotional causes. "Everything just bothering my conscience," he said of the reasons he was homeless. "How can I ask God for forgiveness when I don't forgive myself? So I'll torture myself and go to the cave."

Sister Lauria often coaxed him out of the cave with the promise of odd jobs and a good laugh. He became one of her regular assistants, accompanying her on holidays to feed the homeless. Last year, a deliveryman who works in the neighborhood needed a place to stay, so Johnny gave him his room in the cave and moved to the opposite wall.

"I try to imitate her," Johnny said of Sister Lauria, a member of the Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, N.Y. "She imitates Christ. I try to imitate her."

She was thrilled for Johnny when he moved into the apartment. "I felt like I was a mother sending my son away to college," said Sister Lauria, who helps the homeless as an outreach worker for the Highbridge Community Life Center and as a manager of a thrift shop run by Siena House, a women's shelter.

But she was worried about how he would cope. She had seen other homeless people struggle to adapt to life indoors.

Johnny struggled, too. Weeks after moving in, he kept returning to the cave. He missed his cats, whom he called his soldiers. He missed his old neighborhood around Ogden Avenue. He went back out of concern for his former roommate, the deliveryman, and he went back to feed his addictions. He hates and loves his crack cocaine habit, just as he hates and loves his cave. "When you pick up drugs," he said, "you're saying goodbye to all your dreams, all your goals and all you can be."

He figured he stayed in the cave the first three weeks he had the apartment. By March, he had taken the doors off a closet and used them as partitions to create a small darkened hideout, like a room in the cave. By April, Sister Lauria had not seen him for about two weeks, so she paid him a visit. She found he had put up plastic tablecloths and plastic bags all over the apartment, on the walls and on the ceiling. He told her he thought his neighbors were spying on him.

He took down the plastic, but moved out soon after. He lived there for four months, from early January to late April.

He said he had become uncomfortable there. "Even though I had paid the rent, I never really slept there," he said. "There was no life in the apartment. I will compare it to a spring break, with all the utilities and this and that and whatever. But no, it's not for me."

The Bridge had offered him another apartment and tried to have him undergo a psychiatric evaluation, but Johnny missed those appointments. "We hope that Johnny will come back," said Mr. Beitchman, the executive director of the Bridge. "We do hope. Our experience in all these years is that folks are at different points of readiness at different times."

Johnny returned to Ogden Avenue and began running errands again for Sister Lauria. She helped get him a job at a substance abuse treatment program. Johnny did janitorial work for several days. Then he quit. He was overpaid by mistake, and he returned the money because he felt it was the right thing to do.

In the end, he left the apartment for reasons that made sense only to him. Because of his paranoia and schizophrenia, because of crack, because he felt isolated from those who knew him best, because of the cats, because the bathroom was too small, because he didn't want to live there without a spouse.

Some in his old neighborhood were upset with Johnny, but Sister Lauria told them not to judge him.

Whenever Johnny became fed up once again with life on the streets, she was ready to help him find another apartment.

“Even though housing seemed like a baby step in light of everything else going on in his life, it was too much of a big step,” she said.

Johnny said he was now sleeping in a plywood hut he had built near the cave. He was a jumble of emotions, a paradox of hope and despair. He said he worried that he might be infected with [H.I.V.](#) He said that he had never been happier and that the best thing God ever made was tomorrow.

One recent afternoon, Johnny was back in the cave. Candles lighted a back room in a far corner, at the end of a maze of garbage bags and concrete walls. He talked about fixing it up again. He smoked some crack through a thin glass tube the size of a cigarette. Then he crawled out, worried about Sister Lauria.

His life swayed in this way, between the world above and the one below. On Friday, he said he was ready to work with the Bridge again and to give an apartment another try. He had thrown the tube that he uses as a crack pipe against a wall in the cave. It had been nearly two days since he last got high. “I had to tell Satan, ‘You don’t own me,’ ” he said.

He went to a store across the street from the thrift shop. He bought a bottle of nonalcoholic sparkling apple cider, to celebrate.

Brent McDonald contributed reporting.

[Copyright 2007 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)

Nearly 13.4 million pounds of food distributed here

*By Kirsten Fredrickson
News-Review
Staff Writer*

HARBOR SPRINGS — Gathered in a circle around shelves stacked full of food, their hands clasped together and their heads bowed in prayer, the small group of volunteers gives thanks for what they'd been given.



Kay Geuder, a volunteer for The Manna Project, re-packages bagels that were donated to the food pantry. Behind her is just a small portion of food waiting to be distributed to families in need. (Kirsten Fredrickson/News-Review)

Then the doors open, people of every age flood in and those same volunteers give the food away. In a flurry of activity, they smile and they talk with their neighbors, emptying the shelves as quickly as they filled them. Cars drive away filled with the food that once filled the shelves and a happiness radiates through the food pantry.

At The Manna Project — Manna is a Biblical word describing the food that miraculously was provided for the Israelites in the wilderness — it's just another day of giving. Just one of the more than 7,000 days of giving over its 20 year history.

“Being with Manna puts life in perspective,” said executive director Kathy Hart, who joined the organization in 2004. “It’s amazing how the fingers go out and touch so many people. Hunger affects everyone. Some days we’re just overwhelmed by the number of people that come through the door.”

Small beginnings

Before the busy days of handing out food at the pantry and the large warehouse filled with more to give away, The Manna Project was just an idea. It began in the minds of five men, Joe Baird, Dennis Cross, Jim Alton, the now deceased Budd Tallberg and Larry Poller, who now lives in Florida.

“Beginning in 1986 there was a group of us that got together for coffee; just shooting the breeze. We wanted to demonstrate what it meant to be a Christian,” recalled Baird, now 57 and living in Petoskey.

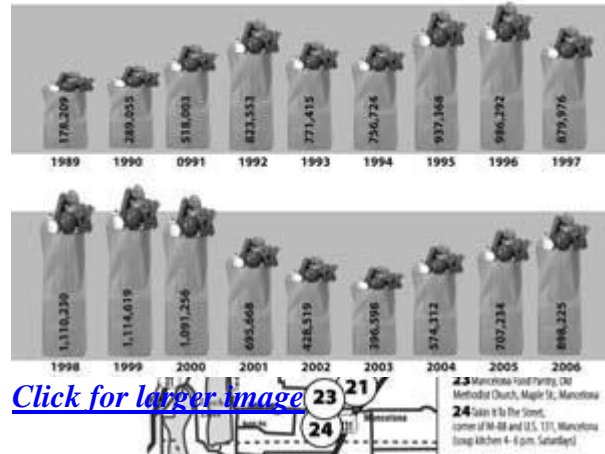
The idea of creating a local soup kitchen was thrown out by Poller, an area pastor at that time. And the men began looking for a location to give out free meals.

“The original idea of a soup kitchen kind of faded when we realized how much surplus food was available,” Cross said. “So we went off in that direction and started The Manna Project as a food bank.”

But beginnings were small.

“At first we thought we’d all throw some money into a hat and buy some groceries,” said Baird. Those groceries would be given to a few families they knew of who were struggling. “Mr. Tallberg would twist our arms and tell us that was not enough.”

So with the help of the United Methodist Church of Petoskey the men learned of more families in need of assistance. They began collecting more donations.



[Click for larger image](#)

[Click for larger image](#)

“People found out what we were doing and they would literally stop us on the streets to give us money. People in need began to contact us, too,” Baird continued. “The thing just sort of took off from there. That’s the humble beginnings of it.”

By April of 1987 The Manna Project became incorporated as a non-profit organization. The group also during this time formed a partnership with Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan in Grand Rapids. Volunteers began traveling to bring back truckloads of food.

“I brought back the first load in an old pickup,” recalled Alton, the first director of the organization. “It was small beginnings but it was a beginning. The first year was tough. We were running back and forth (to Grand Rapids).”

Alton admitted they were just making things up as they went along, seeing what worked best and what didn’t. And they were trying to spread the word.

“It kept growing and growing. It grew and grew on its own,” he added.

Baird said for him the experience of watching The Manna Project take on a life of its own was a “humbling” experience.

“It’s the most amazing thing,” he said. “The truth of the matter is, as The Manna Project took on a life of its own, our basic job was to make sure we handled all the money properly and we had the food. This is an incredibly giving community. We didn’t need to ask, the money was just there.”

A growing need

Three months following its incorporation The Manna Project had its first home, a small, rented warehouse on Clarion Avenue. The food pantry was open two days a week. Trucks were now being rented to bring food back from Grand Rapids.

“I remember when we got our first truckload of food. It was 10,000 pounds of food. I just couldn’t fathom that much food,” Baird remembered. “It was exciting and just fascinating for me to watch it from its beginnings. To be honest I think any of us, if we looked at it ... it satisfied our need to be able to do something. I’m confident the other four never imagined it would go where it has gone today.”

By the fall of 1987, approximately 20,000 pounds of food was being distributed monthly from the pantry. As it continued to grow into the early 1990s, The Manna Project became more than just a pantry. It became what it is today, a food distribution center that supports other local food pantries and area agencies, as well as its own pantry.

“The Manna Project, it is the only one up here able to get the food from Second Harvest (bought at 8 cents a pound, \$250 per truck) up here in large quantities. Otherwise the

pantries would have to go to Grand Rapids,” said current director Hart. “It’s amazing the amount of food that goes out of the warehouse.”

A shining example

Ann Olson was just 24 years old when The Manna Project first came to fruition. Her mother, Dorothy Bain, was active in Larry Poller’s church, White Stone Chapel, and became one of the first volunteers for the food pantry.

“They knew there was a calling for this. They had faith that it would grow,” Olson said of those pioneers. Her mother, who died 18 years ago, would not see its end result though. “This would bring (my mother) to tears if she saw it. She’d be so proud.”

Olson now volunteers when she can.

“I think it’s a blessing of God. I think God has spoken to the heart of all the volunteers,” she said with a smile. “If it’s this big now, think of what it’ll be like in 10 years.”

John Arnold, executive director of Second Harvest Gleaners, calls The Manna Project “a real role model” for other pantries and distribution centers across the state.

“The Manna Project is the only food pantry that I’m aware of that when they saw need they sat down and got out their Bibles. The model they developed is unique. It is the only food pantry I know that began with Biblical teachings on caring,” he said.

And The Manna Project knows its role is simply to make food available to those families in need, letting the families decide what’s best for them, he added.

“The Manna Project over its 20 years has had its ups and downs but at the heart of it has always been the knowledge that there is food going to waste and people who need it,” Cross said. “The whole objective was to let the people identify their need and make the food available to them. That is still how Manna is directly distributing food.”

Manna’s future

While those involved with The Manna Project would love to see a day when there was no need for them, they are happy to say they’re not going anywhere.

“I would like to strengthen the pantries in some of the surrounding counties, Cheboygan and Antrim,” Hart said thinking toward the future. “We don’t want anyone going hungry or (pantries) shutting down because they can’t afford food.”

The organization is also in the middle of a capital fund campaign to increase the size of its warehouse. This will allow for a larger freezer, cooler and cleaning space, as well as additional dry storage.

“That it’s still providing a valuable service ... it’s gratifying in that regard. I’m just really pleased that not only does it have a vital role in the community but it has the support of the community,” Cross said. “Maybe it’s even more important right now as our community and communities all across Michigan are facing tough economic times.”

All sorts of food

Mussels in garlic butter. New York strip steak. Crab legs. Even tripe, which is the thin layer of fat lining the intestines.

The Manna Project has had all types of food come through its Harbor Springs warehouse and food pantry doors.

“Someone came through and said ‘Oh, my! My family is from Scotland and I know just how to cook that tripe,’” recalled Kathy Hart, director of the 20-year-old non-profit organization dedicated to providing food to those in need in Northern Michigan. “We always find someone to use it!”

Over the years The Manna Project has been host to millions of pounds — approximately 13,397,292 pounds since 1987 — of food, coming in one door and going out the other to needy families in Charlevoix, Emmet and Antrim counties. As the times changed, so has the food.

John Arnold, executive director of Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan, Inc. which provides food to The Manna Project, said the food industry constantly fluctuates. That means the food available to food pantries also changes.

“The biggest change is a pretty dramatic shift away from basic ingredients (like sugar and flour) into finished products,” he said. “It seems fewer people are doing their own cooking from scratch.”

Arnold said people are also relying less on canned vegetables and moving toward fresh or frozen products — things like frozen entrees, boil-in-a-bag vegetables and frozen breads. He said that falls in line with national trends toward taste, convenience and nutrition.

“Generally if you freeze food you don’t have to put as much sugar or salt in it. You maintain more nutrients,” he explained. And, of course, it’s faster.

But it makes it more challenging for pantries like Manna because those products have a shorter shelf life. And pantries have to have the freezers to be able to store them.

Hart said when ordering food for the warehouse and pantry she tries to think of products that her clients will like. That includes everything from cereals, toiletries, baby food and even pet food. And she relies on local donations of breads, meat and baked goods to fill out the offerings.

“We try to order the most healthy, nutritious foods that we can. But just because someone doesn’t have (lots of) money doesn’t mean they don’t deserve a treat.”

Kirsten Fredrickson can be reached at 439-9398, or kfredrickson@petoskeynews.com.



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Grillin' aids 'hidden hungry' Event raises funds for food distribution agencies

Monday, June 11, 2007

BY TINA REED

News Special Writer

Margie Hagene was probably the only volunteer at the "Grillin' for Food Gatherers" annual picnic on Sunday who had brought her warm fleece jacket.

Inside a refrigerated truck, which was well-organized but packed with food, Hagene scrambled to mix dressings into salads before rushing them out in the hot summer air to waiting volunteers.

"What can I get you?" said Hagene, who has become the event's "Salad Queen" after at least 13 years of volunteering for the organization in different capacities. She keeps coming back because of a growing number of the "hidden hungry," she said.

"There are more people who you wouldn't expect to need assistance, who live in houses like yours and mine, who have to choose between food and utilities, between food and medication."

Food Gatherers is a nonprofit organization that distributes food to 150 agencies and assistance programs in Washtenaw County by rescuing food from area restaurants and collecting nonperishable items from community donations.

Economic downturns, most notably seen in Washtenaw County with the planned departure of Pfizer labs in Ann Arbor, are affecting everyone, Hagene said.

At the 18th annual Grillin' event, volunteers worked at grills filled with chicken, sausages and corn on the cob, while others handed out a variety of salads and pastas from local restaurants. Local bands played and guests perused almost 100 items up for bid during a silent auction at the fundraiser held on the Washtenaw Farm Council Grounds.

While organizers expected they would raise a planned \$150,000 this year, the amount won't cover the usual 20 percent of the organization's operating budget.

"Gas is one of those expenses that keeps skyrocketing; it has gone up 40 percent in two years," said Eileen Spring, Food Gatherers president and CEO. "We have to have trucks on the road six days a week."

Since 2001, agencies around the county have reported increases in assistance requests, while they have fewer resources to count on, Spring said.

A grant program funded by Pfizer which helps provide foods with protein to Washtenaw County agencies will only continue this year and will be hard to replace, Spring said. Food Gatherers also expects to be hurt as the local United Way loses annual donations from the pharmaceutical company.

Those aren't the only effects of downturns in the local economy, said Marti Lachapell, director of agency relations for Food Gatherers.

"It was Pfizer employees who were paying for the haircut or for the nanny that aren't going to anymore," Lachapell said. "Michigan's economy is going downhill and (organizations are) seeing the need going up, but the pots of money aren't growing."

At one of the picnic tables, Ann Arbor residents John Sheehy and Anna Tolis, and Ypsilanti resident Jill

Ratajczak enjoyed their meals.

They regretted that many couldn't eat so well. They said they tried to do their part to help the local economy by supporting local causes and businesses.

"In general, I've seen more of a trend to support the local economy and the locally owned businesses," Sheehy said. "If I have to spend more money at a smaller store, that's fine. Unfortunately, not everyone can do that."

For Hagene, the Food Gatherers volunteer structure - which partners with for-profit businesses - embodies what is part of the solution to hunger in Washtenaw County.

"It's intended to engage the community in owning this issue," Hagene said. "I don't believe anyone should be hungry. I want to do my part to make sure that doesn't happen. We all have to make a decision to act or not."

©2007 Ann Arbor News

© 2007 Michigan Live. All Rights Reserved.

[<<Back](#)

State Lawmakers Plan to Privatize More Programs

June 8, 2007 07:27 AM EDT

State senate republicans want to privatize more social service programs. A plan put forth by some GOP members would put more of the states' foster care, adoption and juvenile justice programs into private hands. Republicans say it will save money for next fiscal year. Many democrats disagree, saying it sacrifices public oversight and could cost 800 state workers their jobs. The plan would face a tough go with the democratic-controlled house and the governor's office.



All content © Copyright 2000 - 2007 WorldNow and WLNS. All Rights Reserved.
For more information on this site, please read our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Terms of Service](#).